Before beginning any design work, the project team conducted surveys of the study area in order to analyze the existing conditions in Downtown. The project team identified property conditions through several walking tours and windshield surveys, in addition to meetings with citizens, property and business owners, Town officials, and other stakeholders. Numerous members of the community participated in each part of the process, helping to guide the design team towards specific areas requiring extra focus. The Ripe and Firm Analysis map depicts the community’s collective assessment of properties and conditions in the downtown area. It includes suggestions gathered before, during, and after the public charrette process.

The Ripe & Firm Analysis provides a working map that helps to evaluate the downtown’s current property conditions. Parcels determined to be “Firm” are generally in their final building/land-use pattern and reflect the “highest and best use” according to real estate and appraisal forecasts. Such properties typically require little to no intervention, though improvements might further enhance their appeal.

“Ripe” properties, on the other hand, typically offer significant development/redevelopment opportunities. These include those parcels that are currently undeveloped, underdeveloped (able to accommodate additional on-site expansion/development), or in need of redevelopment (such as a vacant shopping center). Parcels appearing in yellow lie somewhere in-between, or the exact future of the property’s future is uncertain/unknown.

This analysis enables the project team to focus efforts on specific, high-priority areas. It also helps to protect areas in the community believed to be important for their civic value or other community interests.
PLACE GAME
This tool was used during the public walking tour of downtown Boone to give the design team a sense of what areas the community values and what makes those "places" successful. More than 35 residents, business owners, and other stakeholders participated in the walking tour. Each individual scored the various areas of downtown using the survey sheet at right. The average scores for each area are reflected in the table above with 4 being the best possible score on the listed attributes and 1 being the worst score. Notes for each site written by place game participants is included in the Appendix.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>King St @ Water St</th>
<th>Queen Street</th>
<th>W. Howard St</th>
<th>King St @ Depot St</th>
<th>Depot St @ Rivers St</th>
<th>Grand Blvd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comfort &amp; Image</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCESS &amp; LINKAGES</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USES &amp; ACTIVITIES</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Average Score</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During the charrette, a list was generated by listening to the public’s long term and short term visions for the downtown area. The ideas included:

SHORT TERM IMPROVEMENTS
- More benches
- Companies pay for benches (art contest)
- New street paint (Depot & River) (Pedestrian cross walk enhancements)
- Pedestrian scaled lighting on King Street (north side very dark at night)
- Consolidate signage/wayfinding
- Make bus stops more obvious (bus stops with benches)
- Direct people to parking with signage (use Raley Hall parking for weekends)
- Parking not perceived as quantity issue—may be in the future
- Private/public parking—perception of more private
- Speakers for music along King Street (Morganton, Hendersonville)
- Wi-Fi—coordinated zone for downtown
- Sidewalk cafes
- Nightlife has picked up in last year—makes safety even more important
- Better garbage cans
- Weekends—trash cans get full (need more frequent emptying)

LONG TERM IMPROVEMENTS
- Implementation!
- Uniform look in downtown
- Lacking quaint charm of... Banner Elk, Blowing Rock, etc.—apply concept to the streets as many shops are doing
- Authentic/Balance (“We are real!”) Don’t be Helen, GA
- Traffic issues solved
- Parking requirements in downtown (change/reduce/eliminate)
- Parking (ensure where?)
- New investment and development in downtown
- Redevelopment of entire blocks (facilitate density)
- Planning & Inspections—need flexibility to minimize cost of rehab (goal to make it better than it is now)
- Developer wants market, cost, public commitment
- Need rehab code “How To” Guide, public workshops to educate craft circles
- Municipal tax credits
- Existing Façade Grant Programs, Community Development Grants, Sign Incentive Grants
- Provide business incentives—ability to turn a profit
- More dedicated revenue to reinvestment in downtown (parking tickets, etc.)
- $75,000 MSD tax

- $35,000-$40,000 raised/donations
- Separate operations from capital (important)
- Revise downtown boundary (District tax 14 cents could go to 21 cents)
- Need better retail mix (book store, ice cream parlor, newsstand, small grocery, city government center (fire, police, town hall) already have lots of antique shops and t-shirt shops)
- Lighting (Depot from campus to King)
- Wayfinding Package (in house) [$80-100,000]
- No open/common space (can be small)—way to clean up dead spots
- Buildings are not up to code
- Bring families into downtown during later hours—need programming
EXisting Conditions
The downtown area explored during this process included the property along King Street between Appalachian Street to the east and Water Street to the west. Downtown Boone has a “small town flair and metropolitan spirit,” that includes an eclectic mix of shops, restaurants, and services. This high country downtown is full of people who are devoted to its survival and revitalization and are a passionate and enduring population. This will remain a powerful asset as this area continues to evolve and grow. With over 70 businesses in this district, the streets are typically bustling with people and cars.
RECOMMENDATIONS
Complete a Comprehensive Downtown Master Plan. A more detailed and comprehensive master plan for downtown is in order. Such a plan would include a specific market assessment; a branding and signage package; a thorough parking plan; and detailed streetscape, urban design, and regulatory recommendations.

New signage & wayfinding package. A strong branding effort through signage and wayfinding can transform a downtown, and in the case of Boone, highlight many wonderful things already happening. The design package should remain true to Boone’s eclectic nature and highlight the arts and crafts community present in the downtown.

Enhance streetscapes and introduce street furnishings. By planting uparching street trees along the southern side of King Street and in appropriate locations on the northern side, a needed visual rhythm through this corridor will be created. Traffic naturally slows in tree lined sections and the four seasons of beauty can enhance the entire ambiance of the downtown. With little effort and expense, items such as benches and trash receptacles can produce a great starting point for larger enhancement projects. The Town should take advantage of the talented artists within the community and perhaps commission each one to design and construct a bench for the downtown area.

Daylight the creek south of Howard Street and create a downtown park area. Opening up this area and revitalizing it for better stormwater practices will offer not only drainage benefits but green space benefits to the urban core of the Town. This design choice would also produce a natural transition between the downtown core and the university.

Make Howard Street an eclectic and innovative artist’s alley with a mix of uses. An opportunity exists to create a back alley condition of interesting live work units along Howard Street. The plan envisions gallery space in the lower levels and lofts above (i.e. an artists-in-residence program)

Introduce strategic infill and height in appropriate locations. The concept plan illustrates specific building and even entire block opportunities for strong mixed use infill within the downtown. Taking advantage of the grade change from King to Howard offers the benefit of additional height on the low side without impeding on the traditional height conditions along King.

Extend Appalachian Street as a through street or path. Taking Appalachian through to Rivers Street would offer route choices in maneuvering around downtown and to and from the University.

Develop shared parking structures in partnership with the University. The Town and University could each benefit from the location of parking structures within the downtown area. By joining forces, efficiencies are produced in design, construction, maintenance, and revenue. The concept plan illustrates a deck at the corner of Howard and Depot Streets. This location offers the benefit of being convenient to the patrons and business owners of King Street while being one block away from the University’s northern boundary. The University’s Master Plan shows another potential shared deck near King and Hardin Streets.

Create a green pedestrian alley/public space between King and Howard Streets: A small surface parking area currently resides at the midblock of downtown. The concept plan suggests turning this space into a landscaped pedestrian alley and linear park. The experience should be enhanced with tree, shrub, and flower plantings as well as a curvilinear pathway connecting the parallel streets.
The Boone 2030 Land Use Plan

Adopted October 2009

Boone, North Carolina

Downtown Infill Opportunity

Appropriate Infill

One of the efforts at the charrette involved determining the appropriate types of infill for downtown both architecturally and in terms of scale. The concept for this prominent King Street corner is to replace single story buildings with three-story, mixed-use structures in the same location. The new buildings are consistent with existing buildings in design and massing and provide an opportunity to triple the square footage on the site and allow for additional uses of the upper stories such as office space or residential units. Participants at the charrette agreed that buildings should be no taller than four stories on King Street.
APPROPRIATE INFILL
While charrette participants agreed that four stories was an appropriate height for King Street, they stated that taller buildings would fit along Howard Street and other locations in downtown. The concept on this page shows a redevelopment concept for the existing single-story building with a six-story mixed-use building with retail on the lower level and residential units facing the restored creek above. Because Howard Street is lower than King, the overall building height would be similar to the buildings on King Street.
Many people that express parking concerns likely desire closer parking rather than more parking. A preliminary downtown parking inventory was completed for this plan. The diagram on this page shows the existing public surface parking lots and on street spaces. Future decisions regarding public parking (on-street and off-street) should be made based on this accurate supply and demand data. Urban Land Institute (ULI) recently published shared use parking characteristics for land uses. The shared use concept suggests the ability for various land use activities to share a particular supply of parking without impediment. Different land use activities (commercial, public, residential, etc.) exhibit different parking demands throughout the day allowing for a more efficient use of parking supply.

Effective management of on-street parking spaces is critical to providing adequate and convenient access for residents, business owners, and customers to shops, stores, offices, and homes. While hourly restrictions are in place along some streets, inconsistent enforcement and insufficient penalties fail to influence parker behavior. Many of the remaining parking spaces – those on adjacent side streets, residential streets, and alleys – are mostly unregulated. Parking spaces in the most desirable parking locations should be priced to promote turnover for retail customers and maintain a 15% vacancy rate. Variable pricing throughout parking locations should be implemented.

The Town should evaluate the following strategies to help maximize the use of downtown "main" downtown streets, two-hour parking restrictions may be needed to deal with differing parking demand. On the "main" downtown streets, two-hour parking restrictions are recommended to be implemented, signed, and enforced.

The Town should evaluate the following strategies to help maximize the use of existing parking facilities and help promote continued infill development downtown:

- Designate and enforce "A" streets (primary pedestrian corridors) for 2-hour on-street parking
- Provide more publicly-owned parking in strategic locations (i.e., not on "A" streets)
- Enhance the design and lighting of public parking
- Provide specialty signage that is clear and direct for motorists entering downtown. Parking signage should work in concert with an enhanced way-finding strategy for the downtown. In addition, kiosks and brochures for downtown should include locations where public parking is permitted and encouraged.
- Develop a parking strategy for larger-scale trip generators (Town, County, and University buildings)
The northern boundary of Appalachian State University abuts Boone’s Downtown District and creates the intersection of “Town & Gown.” While the Town was going through this planning process, ASU was simultaneously updating their campus master plan. In fact, the design teams for each process were all from the same firms and conducted parallel charrette processes. The efficiencies of this decision by both parties was most evident while looking specifically at how the University interfaces with Downtown Boone.

**Promote mixed use infill along King Street.** The illustration to the right demarcates the University’s proposed northern boundary in orange while red and blue buildings are proposed infill construction for the updated campus master plan. Both plans placed an obvious emphasis on the enhancement of the building articulation along King Street. As the “Main Street” of the Town, buildings along this corridor should be pulled close to the street with wide sidewalks and enhanced streetscapes.

The red buildings on the ASU master plan represent proposed new university-owned buildings. The blue buildings represent privately developed mixed-use buildings that might serve university-related uses (residences, offices, and retail). The campus master plan also reflects another potential shared Town-ASU parking deck location at the eastern end of King Street.

**Continue the conversation.** The concurrent charrette process began to open up the lines of communication between the Town and the University. This plan suggests continued meetings as both plans are implemented over the coming months and years.
The following general principles are representative of best practices for downtown development, redevelopment, and retailing. These principles are incorporated in nearly all successful downtowns and shopping environments.

**NIGHTTIME LIGHTING**

There are three basic zones of lighting a downtown - street lighting, pedestrian lighting, and storefront lighting. The first two are generally effective but due to spacing and obstructions such as street trees and signage can have long shadows and dark areas. The most effective way to supplement these areas is with indirect lighting cast from shop front windows. Simple lighting of display windows can provide a measure of security to pedestrians by ensuring an even allocation of light on the sidewalk area.

One of the best ways to promote nighttime activity in the downtown is to encourage downtown business owners to leave their display window lights on at night, at least until a certain hour. The light cast from storefront windows not only provides for an enhanced sense of security but it also serves as an effective marketing tool by enabling merchandise to be better displayed and gives the sense of activity and excitement.

**DISPLAY WINDOWS**

In this same vein, storefronts should be attractively arranged and regularly changed. Mall stores are often required to change out their display windows at least every week so that regular shoppers will get the impression that their is a new selection of merchandise for sale. Of course, this is also a function of how often the average shopper returns to a store. If the average customer comes into the store every two weeks, then the display should be changed that often.

As part of the encouragement to rotate displays, a downtown organization should consider a quarterly award to the best window display. This award should carry with it a cash incentive to be used on storefront improvements as a further incentive for facade reinvestment. Awards should be given for the best individual window display, the best overall displays over a period (quarterly or annually) as well entering all merchants who rotate their window displays at least once per month during the year into a raffle for a third incentive prize.

15 Retail Tips to attract new shoppers

1. Wash your windows at least once a week; wash your front door daily because it is so visible.
2. Polish your brass door handle or scrub your aluminum knob weekly. First impressions matter.
3. Scrape off old stickers from windows-VISA, MasterCard, etc. It is assumed that you take plastic in today’s retail environment.
4. If you don’t take plastic, begin immediately. It is a proven fact that shoppers using plastic have larger average sales that those using cash.
5. Remove old posters and window clutter so shoppers can see into your store. Look inviting to curious eyes.
6. Post your hours on the door so shoppers know when to come back and make a purchase.
7. Change your window displays frequently. The Gap changes its windows once a week.
8. Replace burned-out light bulbs so your store looks maintained and well lit.
9. Increase the wattage of light bulbs throughout your store. Have you shopped in Benetton lately?
10. Leave your display window lights on at night to highlight your merchandise 24 hours a day. Your windows are free advertising!
11. Remove bars on your windows to show shoppers that the neighborhood is safe. Don’t feel comfortable doing that yet? Move the bars inside to the back of the display window.
12. Replace your yellowed Plexiglas windows with clear glass. All the cleaning in the world won’t make a difference if your windows look dingy.
13. Ask your customers what they like about the appearance of your business and what they would like to see change. Then, implement the suggestions.
14. Go on vacation. When you come back, you will have a fresh perspective. Walk through your store with a pad in hand and jot down anything “you never noticed before” that should be repaired, cleaned, upgraded, or replaced.
15. Hire a part-time employee and ask what he or she would change. Or, assign your new employee to make the upgrades!

*Retail Tips compiled by William McLeod, Executive Director of Barracks Row Main Street at bmcleod@barracksrow.org or 202-544-3188. Adapted from article in Main Street News, October 2003.*
INTERIOR MERCHANDISING
As part of the facade improvements, retailers in particular should also consider the merchandising of the front of the store’s interior. While high shelving packed with goods may appear that a store has a wide selection they need to be properly arranged according to basic shopping tendencies.

As a general rule the highest margin items, the goods that retailers make the most money from, should be placed in the front of the store. Low margin, routine items such as milk, dog food, and bread should be placed in the back of the store so that patrons will have to walk past other products that they might “want” before purchasing the items that they “need.” A downtown business group would be an appropriate organization to work with retailers to encourage such practices.

STOREFRONT SIGNAGE
In an eclectic district like a downtown where pedestrian activity is expected to be heavy, it is inappropriate to encourage suburban-style signage standards for storefronts. Specifically, merchants should consider the use of projecting signs and three-dimensional signs as a way to not only advertise the store but also to add ornamentation and detail to storefronts. It is important to note that the current code prohibits this type of signage so a code change will be necessary to implement this recommendation.

Storefront signage must be clean and concise. Signage on the glass should maintain the opacity of the window so as not to obscure viewing into the store. Store hours should be clear and regular. All signs in the windows should be professionally prepared. Avoid hand made signs that look cheap and unattractive as they will give the potential buyer the impression that the contents inside the store are as equally unappealing.

In addition to wall signs and under-canopy signs which should be provided for nearly every storefront, there are a number of buildings that should consider using wall murals for their end walls as they turn down the block. Wall murals were historically used by individual manufacturers such as Coca-Cola to advertise their products. These, of course, were replaced by billboards when the age of the automobile overtook the downtowns. In many communities, these murals have become part of the nostalgia of the area and in fact, are being replicated in new suburban locations such as at the SouthPoint Mall in Durham as a way to break up large blank walls.

A facade improvement grant program could be examined with incentives that may be distributed. The program should also include signage and should specifically encourage new and interesting signage types.

PROMOTE PUBLIC ART
What differentiates a true urban environment from a shopping center is the level of detail that adorns the public realm. Many communities have incorporated fun and educational artwork into their sidewalks and public spaces.

The Town could consider initiating an “Adopt-A-Square” Program with the local arts community and schools for the creative placement of civic art within the sidewalks throughout the downtown district. For example, a brass two-dimensional Daniel Boone figure or other references to Boone’s history and future could be embedded into the concrete of the sidewalk. This type of artwork is not expensive, can easily be expanded and adds interesting features for pedestrians as they walk.

The Town should also encourage the placement of free-standing statuary and other forms of dimensional art work. Specifically, the Town should reserve locations for public art around all public buildings and facilities, such as the proposed Town Hall Plaza. Whimsy is encouraged as a way to enliven spaces and maintain a child-friendly focus.